

tion in which he was interested appeared daring the spring. This was the collection of stories called "Les Soirees de Me'dan,"¹ to which Zola contributed his well-known tale, " L'Attaque du Moulin," which he had previously published in Russia, and which subsequently provided his friend M. Alfred Bruneau with the subject for an opera. Nowadays in its form as a story " L'Attaque du Moulin " has become a reading book in many French and English schools.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, five younger writers, Alexis, Huysmans, Maupassant, Cendrars, and Hennique, had gathered round Zola, whose literary views they largely shared.² Each of them contributed to the so-called " Soire'es de Me'dan," the preface of which stated: "The following stories have been published previously, some in France, others abroad. It has seemed to us that they have sprung from one and the same idea, that their philosophy is identical. We therefore unite them. "We are prepared for all the attacks, the bad faith, and the ignorance of which current criticism has already given us so many examples. Our only concern has been to affirm publicly what are really our friendships and our literary tendencies."

At that time, of the six writers responsible for that preface, only Zola had acquired a position; and such a solemn

manifesto seemed therefore somewhat presumptuous, the more particularly as, apart from Zola's tale, the only other

¹ The first edition (Charpentier, 18mo, 301 pages) was accompanied by ten copies on India and fifty on Dutch paper. There was a special edition in 1890, small 8vo, 807 pages, six portraits etched "by Fernand Desmoulin, and six illustrations etched by Muller after Jeanniot. Of this edition one copy was printed on Japan paper with three sets of the etchings; one copy on parchment with two sets of the etchings before lettering; and sixteen on Dutch paper with two sets of the etchings, both before and after lettering.

³ See *ante*, p. 162>